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to present the truth with no personal bias; by a conservatism that seldom betrays him into such a sweeping and doubtful assertion as: "He [Byron] has affected the spirit of poetry more than any modern man except Shakespeare and Goethe, and on the whole he has deserved to do so" (II, 181); by an inclination to find as much merit and praise as possible; and by no eagerness to linger over faults and scandals. His estimates strike home with a brevity and felicity of expression that startle and please.

The work is very readable, inspiring while it instructs, in a style that is terse, lucid, occasionally tinged with humor or irony, but never carried beyond the bounds of scholarly accuracy on a tide of unrestrained enthusiasm. We have found nothing in the work better than the chapter on Blake; we believe the author more at home with Tennyson than Browning, with Thackeray than Dickens; and admire without applauding his defence of Byron, Macaulay, and Arnold; while we suspect he does not entirely catch the purport and spirit of Carlyle and Newman. On the whole we prefer the first two volumes to the last two, but should not care to lose any. We regret that the valuable notes at the end of each volume did not find a place at the bottom of their respective pages where they would be more serviceable, and that the author did not give us a separate bibliography instead of burying it in his notes. It is to be hoped that in the next issue of the work the separate indices in volumes II and IV will be combined. On the whole this is an excellent, much needed work that will not soon be superseded.

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The American Novel. By CARL VAN DOREN. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921.

Mr. Van Doren's work is not a series of biographical and critical studies of more or less eminent American novelists. It is, as it professes to be, "a chapter in the history of the American imagination." The term *novel* is consequently interpreted as including "long prose narratives in which the element of fact is on the whole less than the element of fiction," and the method is historical rather than critical. The result is the most valuable contribution

made in recent years to our apparatus for the study of American fiction.

Five of the ten chapters into which the book is divided deal with periods and tendencies: the romance that preceded Cooper, with its three subjects—the Revolution, the Settlement, and the Frontier; Cooper's successors in the romance of adventure; the blood and tears of the dime novelists and the domestic sentimentalists; an account of the rich variety of the productive decade 1880-1890; and a discussion of two reactions from realism—rococo romance toward the right and naturalism toward the left. Interspersed among these are chapters which bear the names of individual authors, who thus emerge as the great names in the history of the American novel. They are Cooper, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Howells, and Henry James. The preëminence of these five will be conceded by most readers; and Mr. Van Doren's comments on them will be found to be informing and acute. He reminds us that Cooper, whom fate chose to be "the principal romancer of the new nation," showed a tendency toward realism that is sometimes overlooked. "Cooper," he says, . . . "is not to be neglected as an historian. No man better sums up in fiction the older type of republican—rather than democrat—which established the United States. No one—unless possibly Irving—fixed the current heroic conditions of his day more firmly to actual places." Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, with which the American novel reached its maturity of art and which remains our supreme example of literary skill, Mr. Van Doren discusses convincingly. His comment on Howells and the realism of which he is our most notable exponent is illuminating. The distinction of writing the first American novel which may be called realistic in a modern sense belongs, he says, to Colonel John W. De Forest of Connecticut for his *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*.

Howells Mr. Van Doren regards as the most democratic of novelists. "Fenimore Cooper and Hawthorne, both Democrats, could still never leave off complaining that democracy lacks the elements of saliency and color upon which they thought the prosperity of the novelist depends. What his predecessors shrank from, Howells ardently embraced, thoroughly satisfied to portray the plain universe which lay before him . . ." The "sudden, almost explosive, fame of Mark Twain," for which *The Innocents Abroad*

supplied the match, culminates, in the opinion of Mr. Van Doren, in *Huckleberry Finn*, a "glorious" book, which he contrasts with *The Scarlet Letter* as its only possible rival for first place in our fiction. It is a glorious book, in spite of its looseness of structure; and its value as a social satire—its portrayal of slavery from a contemporary point of view, for example—is not always recognized. It is not so much hatred of kings that is the first article of Mark Twain's creed as hatred of every kind of oppression and a blazing espousal of the cause of the under dog. Witness his exhibition of the cruel futility of the Kentucky feud. But his picture of slavery in the little river town is tempered by an understanding of the institution as it actually existed.

Mr. Van Doren's style is agreeable, free from the smartness of paradox, and lighted by whimsically fresh and compact phrasing. He is probably not aware of an overuse of that latest fashion in tropes, *gesture*; we have Pathfinder's "grandiose gesture of surrender," a "gesture of sentimental asceticism" in Fanshawe, and Henry James's conception of "a romantic American gesture quaintly like that of Daniel Boone," which on the same page becomes "this ingratiating gesture." In both style and matter, however, the book is eminently satisfying. It whets the appetite for that promised further volume in which the same author proposes to discuss fully the American novel of the twentieth century.

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CORRESPONDENCE

*La Galerie du Palais*¹

(1) I did not overlook "the lack of liaison between scenes 9 and 10 of Act I." As Dorimant and Lysandre go off to "dîner ensemble," Hippolyte and Florice come on, returning from the Galerie. There is no lack of liaison. (2) My omission of M. Roy's name was quite unintentional. (3) I cannot agree with Professor Lancaster that the author of the *coup d'essai* (102) must be the same as the imitator of Marino (100). The text, far from indicating this, indicates exactly the reverse. In line 98 the Libraire offers Dorimant *two* books, not one. Obviously one of them is by the imitator of Marino; and Dorimant having rejected it scornfully, the Libraire, *referring to the other*, says:

Ce fut son coup d'essai que cette comédie.

¹ Cf. *MLN.* xxxvi, 427-430.